

THE VIRASAIVA MOVEMENT

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Vows of various kinds are not necessary for religious living and are of no use. Allama said that those who take the vow to live on milk would be born as cats, those whose vow is to eat pulse would be born as horses, those vowing to live on flowers would be born as bees, and those vowing to live on water as frogs. Those whose vow is not devotion our Guheswara will not approve. Nor need men who have accepted religion go on pilgrimage, Having milk why search for cream? Wearing God's symbol why go to sacred places? Sister Mahadevi said that the yard of God's servant's dwelling is holier than Benares.

Caste does not come from birth but from character and it is wrong to keep a man at a distance on account of his birth. Good conduct, said a devotee, is high caste. Bad conduct is out-caste. Allama said that he who cannot eat with you cannot cook for you; he who cannot cook for you cannot come to your house; he who cannot come to your house cannot come to your mind; he who cannot come to the mind cannot come to serve God with you. No one should therefore pretend that there could be partial untouchability.

Many of the sages describe their love of God in terms of human love. The best of these sayings are of Sister Mahadevi. She tells Chennamallikarjuna that she has done penance for ages praying that He should marry her. They smeared the holy

ashes on"
her face and tied the vow-string to her
wrist so that
she should be His. On a seat of emerald
with bunt-
ings of gold, pillars of diamond and canopy
of pearl,
tying ropes of pearl and ruby all round,
her people
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